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Leading Virtual Teams

Case Company Wärtsilä Oyj Abp

International Business
2018

Abstrakt

Författare	Nina Bagge
Lärdomsprovets titel	Leading Virtual Teams
År	2018
Språk	Engelska
Sidantal	46 + 1 bilaga
Handledare	Rosmeriany Nahan-Suomela

Detta lärdomsprov handlar om ledarskap av globalt separerade team. Globaliseringen av handel har tvingat ledarskapsstilar att utvecklas, och denna undersökning har som mål att göra läsaren närmare bekant med den virtuella ledarens roll, och hur man ska lyckas när team medlemmarna och ledaren är geografiskt separerade. Den globala handeln ändras konstant, och att ha alla anställda och chefen på samma ställe är inte längre säkert och inte heller nödvändigt.

Målet med detta lärdomsprovet är att ta reda på vilka särdrag virtuella team har samt hur man leder ett virtuellt team. Den teoretiska delen är indelade i två delar, den första delen ser på virtuella teams, och den andra delen på virtuellt ledarskap. Det första kapitlet presenterar virtuella team och olika modeller av virtuella team. Det undersöker också vad som krävs av den virtuella team medlemmen för att ett team ska lyckas, samt det virtuella teamets roll. Fördelar och nackdelar utforskas också i den första delen av teorin. I den andra delen av teorin förklarar det vad en virtuell ledare är och vad som gör att en virtuell ledare lyckas. Författaren har också sett närmare på begreppet "global mindset" som beskrivs som något som under det senaste årtiondet har uppstått som ett viktigt koncept för virtuellt ledarskap.

En kvalitativ undersökning gjordes vid Wärtsilä Abp och Wärtsilä Finland Ab för att samla empirisk data. Intervjuer utfördes med ledare från företaget och gjordes ansikte mot ansikte samt via skype. Forskningsresultaten bevisade att teorin är aktuell, eftersom flera likheter hittades i teori delen och i den ihopsamlade empiriska datan. Speciellt en färdighet som var viktig både för den anställda och för ledaren, vilket var kommunikationsfärdigheter. Det blev också diskuterat att företaget ännu borde inse värdet av resor, eftersom det ansågs inte finnas tillräckligt många möjligheter för resor.

ABSTRACT

Author	Nina Bagge
Title	Leading Virtual Teams
Year	2018
Language	English
Pages	46 + 1 Appendices
Name of Supervisor	Rosmeriany Nahan- Suomela

This thesis studies leadership of globally dispersed teams. The globalization of trade has forced the development of leadership styles, and this research aimed to introduce the reader to the role of a virtual leader and how to reach success when the team members and the team leader are geographically separated. The world of business is rapidly changing and having all employees and managers in the same place is no longer a certainty, nor a necessity.

The objective of the thesis was to find out what the features of a virtual team are and how to lead a virtual team. The theoretical framework is divided into two sections, the first is looking at virtual teams and the other at virtual leadership. The first chapter presents the virtual team and different models of a virtual team. It also explores what is needed from a virtual team member in order for the team to be successful, and the role of a virtual team. The advantages and disadvantages were also explored in the first section of the theoretical findings. The second section explains what a virtual leader is and what the different aspects of a successful virtual leader are. A closer look at the global mind set was taken. It is which is referred to as something that “has, during this last decade, arisen as an important concept pertinent to virtual leadership abilities, and that it is an imperative leadership distinction”.

A qualitative research was conducted at Wärtsilä Oyj and at Wärtsilä Finland Oy for the collection of empirical data. Interviews with team leaders in the case company were held both face to face and over Skype. The research findings proved that the theoretical study is current, as several similarities were found in the theory part as in the empirical data which was collected. There was one skill in particular that was mentioned to be imperative both for the team member and the team leader, and that was communication skills. However, it was discussed that the company has yet to see the value of travelling, as it is at this moment not possible as often as needed.

Keywords	virtual team, leadership, success, aspects, qualities
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The world of business is rapidly changing and having all employees and managers in the same place is no longer a certainty, nor a necessity. According to Kayworth and Leidner (2002) organizations deploying virtual teams face serious challenges. Even though traditional teams face similar problems, in virtual team settings they become more pronounced and unique issues may also appear. One of these challenges is the team leadership. Being the leader of a group of people who have different locations, different languages and live in different time zones is extremely complicated.

The findings of Kayworth & Leidner (2002), suggest that to lead a virtual team, the leader needs to be able to perform many different roles at the same time. It was also discovered that team leaders who are highly effective have high empathy and act as a mentor to the team members without losing their authority. Kayworth & Leidner also found that communication from the leader to the team members was very important in virtual settings.

According to Bell & Kozlowski (2002) virtual team leaders may not need to act as team leaders, as virtual team members often are hired based on earlier experiences in working in virtual settings. Therefore, it is suggested that team members work more independently and self- managerial! However, to accomplish a more self-managed team, the leader needs to give clear instructions and goals. It is also said that the team leader can set rules for the team that, for example, explains appropriate behaviour.

Lee- Kelley (2002) focuses her study on the management of virtual project teams and where the outcome of the team's performance is measured by how beneficial the project was. According to Lee- Kelley it is for the leader a matter of being able to shift the managerial aspects during the project's life-cycle. The author reverts back to Fiedler (1995), who claims that such behaviour is not possible as there are

only two main characteristics of a leader, “relationship- motivated” and “task- motivated”. However, other authors claim the opposite, that a leader can change styles as demanded by the situation. As the global market has become more familiar with the setup of virtual teams, the demand on literature regarding the subject has increased. This thesis will provide the reader with information useful for leading a virtual team.

1.2 Aims and research questions

This research aims to point out the most significant features of a virtual team as well as the key qualities needed of a virtual leader. This thesis aims to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What are the features of a virtual team?
- 2) What are the key qualities needed of a virtual team leader?

To investigate these questions this research will look at the study from a virtual team leader’s point of view.

1.3 Research method and limitations

The research method for this thesis is qualitative. Data is collected by four semi-structured interviews conducted face to face as well as an online interview via Skype with virtual team leaders at Wärtsilä Oyj ABp and Wärtsilä Finland OY. There are some limitations which apply to this research. This research is communicated for Wärtsilä, and so the findings might not be relevant to other organizations. The research method also causes limitations to the study, as only a qualitative method is being used, while a quantitative research method could be beneficial in this case. The fact that the team members’ point of view is not considered in this study should also be pointed out.

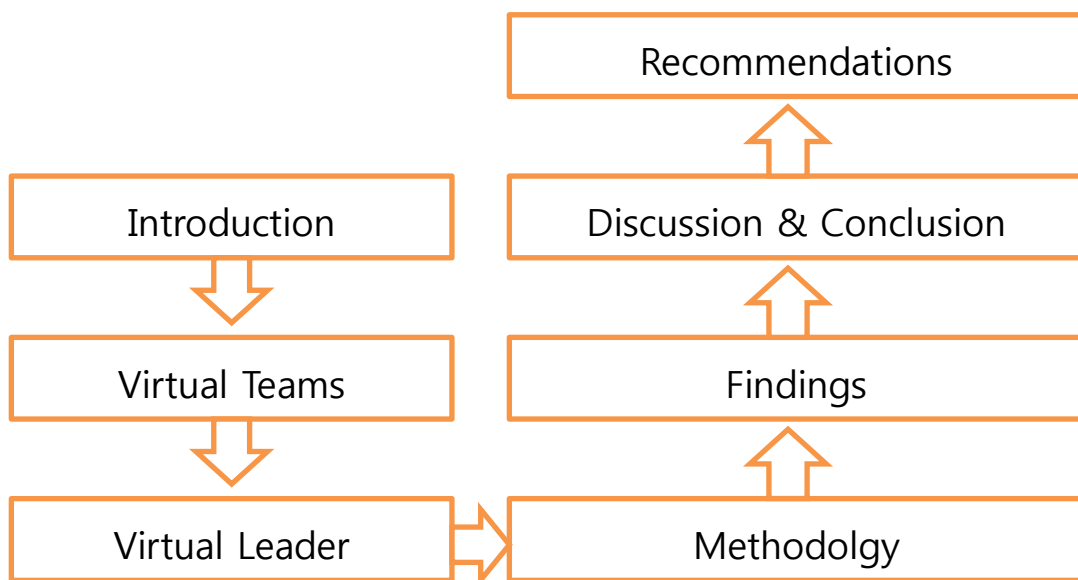
1.4 Thesis structure

This thesis contains seven chapters which can be compiled into two main sections. The first section is the theoretical study and the second section is the empirical

study. Chapter 1 introduces the reader to the background of the study as well as the research aim, research method and the limitations of the study. The second and the third chapter contains the theoretical study of the thesis. Chapter 2 defines virtual teams and discusses the roles and responsibilities of the virtual team member as well as the skills needed. Chapter 3 focuses on the leadership by defining virtual leadership as well as pointing out different aspects and qualities of a successful virtual leader.

The empirical study is presented in chapter 4, which is based on Wäertsilä. The case company is presented and the research methodology is described as well as the data collection and analysis and the reliability and validity of the study. The findings of the research is presented in chapter 5. The discussion and conclusion can be found in chapter 6 and chapter 7 offers further development ideas and research recommendations. The thesis structure is demonstrated in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Thesis structure



2 VIRTUAL TEAMS

This chapter examines virtual teams. The first part will focus on the definition of virtual teams and explore Fisher & Fishers' different team models, as well as the roles and responsibilities of a virtual team. The second part will cover the skills and needs of a virtual team member and the last part of this chapter will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a virtual team.

2.1 Defining Virtual Teams

“A virtual team is a group of people who work interdependently with a shared purpose across space, time, and organization boundaries using technology.”

Lipnack & Stamps 2000

A virtual team is constructed by a group of people who are interdependently working towards common business goals, all while separated by time, space, organization and culture (Maznevski and Athanassiou 2006). Jones et. al. (2005) define a virtual team as a unit of members who are distributed across several locations. A virtual team can consist of members living in separate areas, telecommuters or working units composed across separate companies.

As the global market is constantly facing changes and the competition has become fierce, virtual teams are examined as an effective solution for strategy definition, customer insight, decisions coordination and implementation of key actions around the globe. According to Malhotra et. al. (2007), global teams frequently use technology for communicating, due to the fact that face- to face meeting opportunities are limited, if at all existing.

This kind of commercial team is described by Hunsaker and Hunsaker (2008) as the combination of two components which separates them from conventional teams: communication and personal communication, spatial information and space. Traditional teams have the opportunity to share information in a common space and time, whereas virtual teams convey knowledge and information through communication tools such as tele/videoconferencing, e-mails, phone calls and chats.

Nemiro (2004) suggest that members of geographically dispersed teams do not automatically see themselves as enclosed in a virtual team as such, simply just part of a team with different ways of communicating and looser perimeters. When distance forces team members to communicate using various methods, work patterns, decision making processes, relationships and regular understanding of the task, changes. (Berry 2011: 186)

Two evident benefits have been established in the literature concerning the spatial distance occurring in virtual teams. One is the context of the virtual team; Corporations are provided with access to exclusive, highly specialized competences thanks to the distinct coalition of knowledge and capacities offered by a diverse and global pool of team members. Another recognized benefit is the architecture of the global team, where the representatives are able to, thanks to virtual technology, preserve information richness, collaborate creatively and expedite decision making more collectively. (Bell & Kozlowski, 2002; Wong & Burton, 2000; Gibson & Gibbs, 2006; Fisher & Fisher, 2001).

According to Fisher & Fisher (2001), virtual teams can be categorized into six different settings. Global teams customarily diverge from regular teams by crossing the confinements of culture, space and time. In Table 1, their example of possible team settings is shown.

Table 1: Types of Virtual Teams

Team Type	Same Time	Same Space	Same culture
1	No	Yes	No
2	No	No	No
3	Yes	No	No
4	No	Yes	Yes
5	No	No	Yes
6	Yes	No	Yes

Source: Fisher & Fisher (2001)

By recognizing which type of team setting is at hand, the team leader have the possibility to formulate certain aspects of the leadership according to its needs. For instance, team types three and six have the benefits of shared time and the possibility to meet, but need to consider possible cultural discrepancies. Team settings one and four have the advantage of sharing the same space and according to Fisher & Fisher, this aids in creating a sense of proximity and team identity. Teams two and five are forced to rely on solid work processes, technology and clear communication.

According to Charan (2013), virtual teams offer corporations the adaptability to cultivate sustainable competitive advantages, they have progressively crucial role in the present- day organizational life. These teams as well as their leaders are accountable for product development, cultivating international marketing strategies, promotional campaigns, setting costs and handling public and/ or private customers. Due to this, the team has to harmonize the customer collaborations, company's regions and resources, and at the same time maintain local receptivity where essential. (Pauleen 2003).

Charan (2013) states that virtual teams promote a link amongst various key business functions, such as service delivery, product development, financial accountability, and customers across the world. Close networks must be built by virtual team leaders and they must communicate comprehensively with their adherents as well as the entire organization to accomplish the potential value of their international strategy. (Day, 1994; Maznevski & DiStefano, 2000; Zander et al 2012)

Global teams are frequently given the responsibility of the most imperative tasks in a corporation, for example acquisitions and consolidation negotiations, international product launching and administering vital alliances. (Maznevski & Chudoba, 2000). According to Zanders et al (2012) projection, global virtual teams will model the primary organizational architecture of 21st- century intercontinental companies.

2.2 The skills and needs of the virtual team member

According to Duarte & Snyder (2006), there are five fundamental skills needed to be a successful virtual team member. The first skill, to be individually able to handle the narrow division between obligations and freedom, is seen as the main quality. The level of commitment needs to be on a rational scale, to avoid the feeling of over performance or feeling indifferent, while teamwork and coordination has to be bonded with heighten measures of independence.

The second skill, the ability to manage oneself as a part of a team in a dispensed setting, is considered important. Attributes like prioritizing, seizing opportunities and taking initiatives identifies the team member with vast accomplishments, as opposed to the ordinary team member. Being technology-shrewd and being skilled with the use of devices and programs and knowing how to select the right communication channels for different issues all the while knowing the company's technology courtesies, is highly beneficial for the team member. (Duarte & Snyder 2006).

Duarte & Snyder state that by recognizing the key players and understanding the organizational set up, and knowing how to maintain appropriate conduct while navigating within particular groups of people, are useful networking skills, as well as using emotional intelligence and finesse while collaborating with crucial shareholders. This is seen as the third skill.

The last two skill ranges mentioned by Duarte & Snyder, involve traversing the perimeters and promoting social awareness. Global teams are constituted by people representing possibly culturally prosperous diversity of functions, interests, stakeholders, decision making styles and organizations, and there for a group's capacity to flourishingly cultivate creativity and being innovative, is directly linked to the capacity to appreciate and take advantage of diversity. This points out that being aware of and sensitive towards personal and cultural characteristics is, for a prosperous virtual team member, a key quality. (Malhotra et al 2007)

2.3 The Advantages and Disadvantages of Virtual Teams

There are three essential advantages that explain the benefits of using global teams according to Jones et al. (2005), listed in Figure 2 below. Aspects like cost saving, organizational agility and the freedom to acquire the best competencies disregarding location, are considered to be the main reasons for developing global teams. Relocating talent is not considered to be cost efficient and may cause stress or other troubles, both for employer and employee. Dispersed competencies allow resolutions for this all the while substantially reducing the costs derived from real estate management and business travels.

Figure 2. Advantages of using virtual teams



Source: Jones et al (2005)

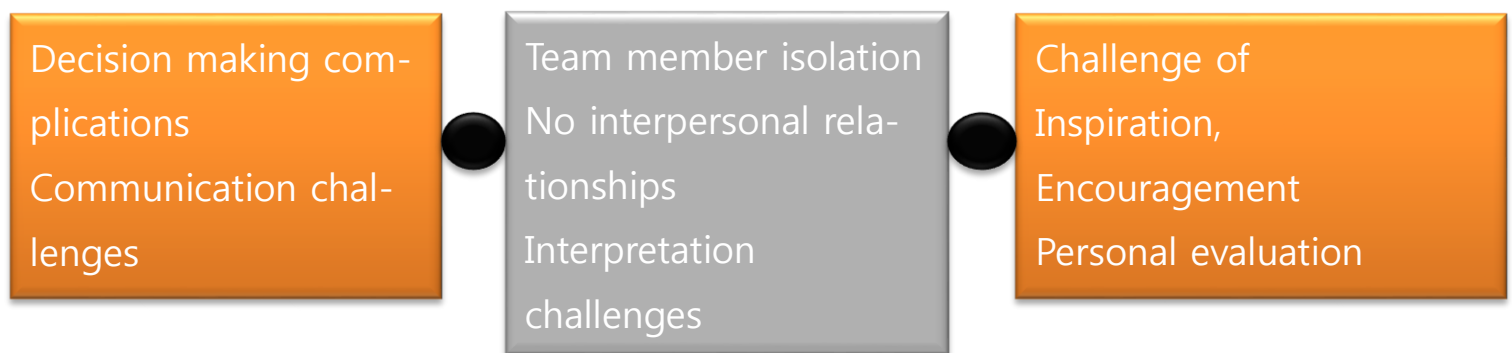
According to Lipnack & Stamps (2000), global teams promote adaptability, excellence and productivity in the corporation as well as creating possible savings for the organization in regards to reached capacity and decreased travel and real estate costs. Swift solutions and speedy intelligence transfers are also aspects offered by virtual teams in the frantic trade environment of today. The authors also state that we have all, thanks to technology, become neighbors when considering the market access and connectedness. Virtual teams challenge space, times zones and organizational barriers, and at its best, learning and novelty within the corporation becomes simpler and creativity prospers.

Jones et. al. state that an improved balance between work and private life has been reported amongst global team members, once accustomed to the independent work

setting. Unification practices of takeovers and organization procurements have become easier by sanctioning virtual communication amongst the concerned parties. It has also come to light that sales representatives have become more mobile since the virtualization progress has been developed, as they are now able to not only to meet the customer but also to complete tasks while on the go.

Listed in Figure 3 below, forming the core issues for global teams are, decision making complications, challenges in communicating and a lack of trust. The main disadvantage virtual teams run the risk of facing, is team member isolation. Problems given an account of feeling lonely or not being able to trust other team members or leader, may generate detachment from unified team efforts and prevalent goals. Extra challenges faced by the leader has to do with inspiration, encouragement, personal evaluation and assessment of dispersed employees. Relying too much on electronic media might interrupt the promotion of interpersonal relationships although at the same time, a successful leader is assumed to be technologically shrewd. Information exchange performed through technology might be obscure as the information can be interpreted in several ways, depending on the information receiver. (Martins et al 2004; Wong & Burton, 2000).

Figure 3. Disadvantages of using virtual teams



Source: Figure adapted from theories by Martins et al (2004) & Wong & Burton (2000).

In chapter two of this thesis, the virtual team was defined and six different team models by Fisher & Fisher were discussed as well as the roles and responsibilities

of the virtual team. The discussion followed by a discussion of the skills needed by the virtual team member and the advantages and disadvantages of a virtual team. The next chapter will discuss virtual leadership.

3 LEADING VIRTUAL TEAMS

This chapter will explore leadership in virtual teams. The main areas for the leader to focus on will be discussed and the aspects of an effective leader. The chapter will end with a discussion about the global mindset and the three capitals, intellectual, cultural and social.

3.1 Leadership in Virtual Teams

“Leadership is the use of noncoercive influence to shape the goals of a group or organization, to motivate behavior toward reaching those goals, and to help determine the group or organizational culture.”

Griffin & Pustay 2005

According to Jaques & Clement (1994), leadership is a series of actions of one person, where he or she sets the course for other people, while getting them to move smoothly together towards the common goal with complete engagement.

Predictive Index (PI) International (2013) states that in order to guarantee contentment within the virtual organization and reach set objectives, all concerned parties need to comprehend how the set-up is beneficial for them. The organization should augment the necessary, to guarantee effective and lucrative leadership, as the use of virtual teams are turning into a more common way of working.

A higher load of distance work, virtual leadership and telecommuting is the result of a trend referred to as “smarter together”, which points to cleverly networked corporations with adaptable global teams. This has in turn brought on additional challenges for leaders, as they are no longer able to lead their teams in same locations, which have allowed the managers to have a personal contact with their subordinates. As an addition, making sure that information is transferred sufficiently, obtaining trust and handling the different geographical and or cultural situations, might challenge the day to day tasks of the leader. (Lipnack & Stamps 2000)

The world of business is rapidly changing and according to Katzenbach (1999), virtual teams are the most flexible and resourceful units in an organization when it comes to coping with the associated constraints. A team should be constructed based on the company's need and because it is expected that this construction will aid in higher performance outcomes, and not simply because of an eagerness to establish teams as such.

It has been stated that team leadership and single leader practices are not to be confused with one another, and it should be understood that singular achievements are not a choice over substantive collateral achievements. When considering this statement, the virtual leader needs to attain particular competencies as well as a diplomatic skill, to be able to favorably structure and lead his team. (Katzenbach 1999).

In earlier days, the most relevant foundation and procedure for leading people was a hierarchical, a structure of conventional ranks of authority and duty. Approaching the business world and managing teams using the conventional hierarchy, is an easy and straightforward way of working. Tasks are clearly distributed amongst the team members and the person in charge of salaries, achievement assessments and recognition is clearly known by all parties. However, this way of working is particularly uncompromising and falls short in the globalization of today's business world when it comes to the capability to comply to change. (Godar & Ferris 2004).

Figure 4: Main Focus Areas of the Virtual Leader



Source: Fisher & Fisher (2001)

Fisher & Fisher (2001) have defined seven essential focus areas for the virtual team leader and they are listed in the above seen chart. When the virtual leader strives for his/ her team to be successful, there are a supplementary as well as varying approaches which become critical. As challenges are added due to the physical separation of leader and team member, the capabilities and qualities, or the scarcity thereof, of the team leader, becomes more obvious.

It is suggested by Hoefling (137- 145) that a manager should attempt to achieve commitment amongst the team members, instead of trying to control them, since virtual setups has made it close to impossible. It is also pointed out that instead of commanding, a team leader should promote communication, and using knowledge, information and assets to connect team members is a preferred way of working in comparison to controlling the information flow and having redundant boundaries. (Barbour 2012).

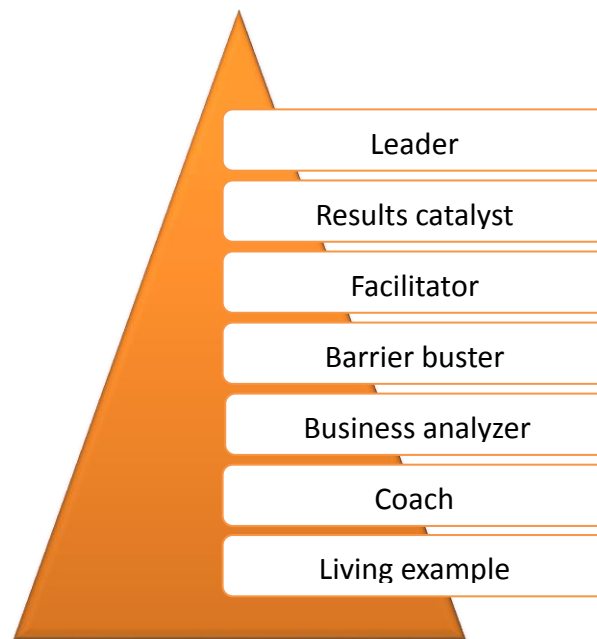
According to Pauleen (2003), it is indispensable to have trust within the team and between the leader and the team members in order to be effective and successful. As the leader does not have access to all the daily on goings, micromanagement

should be avoided, instead he/ she should focus on managing results as it is more sustainable long term. When constructing a good foundation for a successful team and developing trust and union amongst team members, the leader should coach the members and secure a continuing dialogue. (Hoeftling 137- 154).

3.2 Aspects of an Effective Distance Leader

According to Fisher & Fisher (2001), there are seven clusters of abilities prevalent to the lucrative virtual leader. The abilities are listed in Figure 5 below. If a manager is able to use different kinds of leadership styles concurrently, all while occupying several of below mentioned abilities and qualities, then he or she is able to lead a virtual team successfully. This is described by Charan (2013) as “multi-contextual intelligence”.

Figure 5. Competencies of a Successful Virtual Leader



Source: Fisher & Fisher (2001)

For inspiration, vision creation and enthusiasm fostering, the “Leader”, which mentioned as the first competency, has been listed. (Fisher & Fisher, 2001) According to Boatman and Wellins (2011) Virtual leaders support innovation and creativity in the team, and encourage and manage development, providing the utmost benefits

for the corporation. It is suggested that change is critical for the success of a company in the long term, and ongoing reactions to change in the surroundings is vital. (Charan 2013).

According to Fisher & Fisher (2001), for aiding team players focus on imperative tasks and perform as expected, and for leading by principle and not by policy, the second ability, “Results catalyst” is listed. The job of the “Facilitator” , the third ability, is to handle essential instruments and foundation of technology necessary for day-to-day tasks as well as to facilitate fluent communication and to share information. According to Gibson and Cohen (2003), a virtual team’s full capacity can only come to pass when the process of communicating is sufficient. They also state that the process of communicating is the fundamental instrument for creating trust.

The fourth ability mentioned, the “Barriers buster”, or the team defender, handles the corporation politics and makes sure that doors are open for the team. It is also up to the “Barriers buster” to conquer roadblocks and to make certain that all team members’ work is defended and that the individual is being heard. According to Charan (2013), another competency for the virtual leader is the possession of business acumen. The fifth, also known as the “Business analyzer” is deeply perceptive when it comes to analyzing trends and predicting its influence on the corporation’s strategies, construction and systems, and is therefore able to focus the teams efforts on imperative topics. (Fisher & Fisher 2001).

According to Boatman and Wellins (2011), it is crucial for the virtual team to build relationships as it grants a strong development of the departmental culture, it empowers the employee and contributes to profitable collaborations. The sixth ability, the “Coach” identify and develop future talents, helping the individual to reach his or her full potential, and establish ambition and growth amidst the team members. The last ability mentioned, the “Living Example” is the final aspect of being a successful virtual leader, which points out that the leader who works according to his/her own requirements and standards, inspires respect, sincerity and openness within the team. (Fisher & Fisher 2001).

Another imperative skill for the virtual leader is having a so called global mindset. The global mindset can be divided in three parts, the social capital, the intellectual capital and the psychological capital. The global mindset will be discussed in following subchapter.

3.3 The Global Mindset

The global mindset "combines an openness to and awareness of diversity across cultures and markets with a propensity and ability to synthesize across this diversity"

Gupta & Govindarajan 2002

The global mindset is "a highly complex cognitive structure characterized by an openness to and an articulation of multiple cultural and strategic realities on both global and local levels, and the cognitive ability to mediate and integrate across this multiplicity"

Levy et al. 2007

Javidan & Teagarden (2010) state that the global mindset has, during this last decade, arisen as an important concept pertinent to virtual leadership abilities, and that it is an imperative leadership distinction. This rising general agreement indicates the acknowledgement that the current competitive landscape demands a switch of focus from fundamental methods to mindset-based abilities. (Beechler & Baltzley, 2008).

Earley, Ang & Tan (2006) state that the idea of the global mindset contains the leader's ability to successfully adjust to different and unique cultural surroundings as well as the capacity to operate efficiently and without difficulty in cultural situations across the globe, in conjunction with circumstances distinguished by cultural differences. It includes being open towards experiences as well as the ability to handle culturally diversified circumstances efficiently. Managers who have a global

mindset and recognize the importance of comprehending differences in culture generally more capable of successfully leading global and virtual teams. (Gupta, Govindarajan & Wang, 2008).

According to Alon & Higgins (2005), being conscious about the worth of other cultures, all while recognising cultural distinctness, makes a leader have a compelling comparative dominance over others when it comes to managing individuals from different national and cultural experiences and environments. Leaders with a potent global mindset will in a more excellent manner adjust to diverse cultures and are apt to having higher poise and be more efficient in an array of multicultural scenes, compared to leaders with a lesser extent of the global mindset. (Hollenbeck, 2001).

3.3.1 Intellectual Capital

According to Beechler & Javidan (2007), understanding markets operating across the world, knowing the international organization, understanding the global value chain, being informed of the business analyzing perspective, and being able to understand and reason with cultural aspects, is the construct of global intellectual capital. Individuals who exhibit intellectual capital have three imperative personality traits. The first one mentioned by Beechler & Javidan (2007) is a strong international commerce acumen. This entails a sharp awareness of marketing strategies, markets operating across the world as well as its competitiveness. It also includes the knowledge about risk management and how to do business worldwide, having actual knowledge about supplier alternatives.

The second leader characteristic, when it comes to intellectual capital, is recognizing the cultural perspective. The leader with intellectual capital appreciates different cultures from around the globe, and possess an all- encompassing knowledge about significant past events, geography and influential people in countries around the world. The leader also has current understanding and clear overview of imperative financial, political and other global events concerning large parts of the world. (Beechler & Javidan 2007).

Javidan et al. (2010) state that the third prerequisite for the leader who possess intellectual capital, is cognitive complexity. This contains having the capacity to explain convoluted matters in a simple and comprehensible way, the ability to comprehend abstract ideas and understand concepts swiftly, as well as having potent problem solving and analytical abilities. Cabrera & Unruh (2012) state that such individuals have a durable willingness for observing, learning and for being curious.

3.3.2 Psychological Capital

According to Beechler & Javidan (2007), having a strong global intellectual capital alone, will not suffice for being a great leader. Having information and comprehending international affairs are imperative features of a global virtual leader, however, it will not guarantee successful leadership in an international corporation. An individual possessing the intellectual capital but lacking psychological capital is probably, according to Beechler & Javidan, successful in analyzing international business, but not as a global leader.

A global leader is required to have an extensive assortment of psychological qualities, referred to as global psychological capital. Having a positive outlook, being flexible, having grace and hope, being motivated, as well as having dedication towards relationships between people from different cultures, are elements of the positive psychological profile which the global psychological capital is made of.

Three positive features can be found in a leader who has global psychological capital, and the first one mentioned by Beechler & Javidan (2007) is a passion for diversification. This is distinguished by a passion for diversity and for examining other places in the world, learning about and familiarizing oneself with people from these places, and for living abroad. The second feature mentioned is wanting to probe and pursue adventures. Being ready to face potential risks and to have one's characteristics tested and being interested in encountering demanding and uncertain situations, demonstrates this. The third feature is self-confidence. An individual with psychological capital is dynamic and powerful, self-assured and relaxed in awkward situations as well as clever and able. (Javidan et al. 2010).

According to Cabrera & Unruh (2012), a leader with potent psychological capital is able to hold off judgement and partiality which allows the leader to build trustful and genuine relationships with his or her team members. Of the three capitals mentioned in this thesis, the psychological capital is considered to be the most challenging to establish and accomplish as it is strongly attached to personality characteristics which are developed at a young age. It is however possible to enhance and evolve by deliberately practicing and learning by occurrences.

3.3.3 Social Capital

Beechler & Javidan (2007) state that social capital is specified by connections within and outside the organization and by the social network the individual has with persons in distinctive cultural environments. Social capital is made up of various essential aspects, such as leadership skills needed to organize team members on an international level, interpersonal capacities required to establish new relationships and worldwide connections. This demonstrates the leader's competence to ensure advantages by the aid of a broad community network or alternative social arrangements. According to Cabrera & Unruh (2012), social capital is the combination of the individual's private contacts and the advantages these contacts bring.

Intercultural empathy, intercultural impact and diplomacy are the three dimensions of social capital mentioned by Javidan et al. (2010). A leader needs the capability to engage, perform well with, and relate to persons from other places worldwide, this is known as intercultural empathy. The individual also needs to have the trustworthiness and strong prominence as a leader all while being knowledgeable in negotiation in different cultures as well as having good connections with significant people worldwide, this is referred to as intercultural impact.

The last dimension mentioned by Javidan et al (2010), is diplomacy, which allows the leader to effortlessly engage and keep up dialogues with strangers, it shows the capability to listen to other opinions and to consolidate different views, and it is the readiness to cooperate. By the means of intellectual social capital as well as joint

image and significant structures, virtual leaders are capable of bringing about positive energy and inspire and have an impact on his or her team members as a result of their relationships. (Beechler & Javidan, 2007).

This chapter has discussed virtual leadership. It explored the main focus areas of the virtual leader and the main aspects of a successful virtual leader. It also discussed the importance of a global mindset. The following chapter will cover the research methodology, data collection, reliability and validity as well as information about the case company.

4 METHODOLOGY

This chapter embarks on the empirical study of this research. First the methodology is explained and information is given about the case company and the interviewees as well as how the data was collected. Finally the reliability and the validity of the research are discussed. The theoretical study has discussed several segments of virtual teams and virtual leading. The empirical study will, however, focus on the skills needed of the virtual team member, the advantages and disadvantages of virtual teams, virtual leadership and the global mindset.

4.1 Research Methodology

According to Patel & Davidson (2011), there are two ways of conducting a research, the quantitative research and the qualitative research. For this research the qualitative method was chosen. The qualitative research method is often chosen when interviews are conducted, while the quantitative method is used for gathering larger amounts of data for statistical analytical purposes.

The goal of this research was to investigate actions, attitudes as well as issues of the interviewees to recognize the essentials of virtual teams and the leadership of such. The qualitative allows the researcher to talk to a selected few for a deeper understanding of the subject in an actual real life setting. It allows the respondents to answer with their own words and does not provide the researcher with any statistical numbers. Merriam (2009) states that when conducting a qualitative research, the researcher wants to learn about and understand how the targets themselves experience their daily work.

A semi- structured interview was chosen as method for this research, as it best suits the intended information gathering. Although the questions were pre decided in this case, the interviews were conducted in an open discussion manner, which allowed the interviewer to ask follow- up questions which seemed necessary at the point of discussion, and made the interviews more flexible. According to Merriam (2009), for this kind of research, it is common that specific information needs to be collected and the wording does not need to be predetermined.

4.2 Data Collection

According to Merriam (2009), the qualitative research includes a relatively small sample collection that is purposely chosen by the researcher, which can be compared to the quantitative research method where greater amounts of participants are needed which are chosen on a more random basis. The interviews were held either face-to-face or over Skype and they were all held in English except for one in Swedish. The one that was conducted over Skype were held with a participant located in Helsinki and only a voice interview was conducted, video was not included. There were four participants, all from Finland. The interviewees had no background information nor were any questions sent to the participants beforehand.

The first interview was with Mr. Mikael Forsell, who is a director in services, business controlling, Wärtsilä Oyj Abp. Mr. Forsell is located in Vaasa and has worked as a virtual leader for five years and has direct reports in Vaasa, Turku, Helsinki, Great Britain, Germany, The Netherlands, Italy, The US and Singapore. The persons sitting in Germany, Great Britain, the US and Singapore have additional team members reporting to them. In total they are 54 persons located in about 20 countries. The interview was conducted face- to face and in Swedish.

The second interview was with Mr. Jani Heinämäki, who is the team leader for Parts Coordination Management (PCM) Baltic and Black Sea team, Wärtsilä Finland Oy. Mr. Heinämäki is located in Vaasa, he has worked as virtual team leader for approximately six to seven years. His current team members are located in Vaasa and in Gdansk, Poland. In his previous positions he has also had direct reports in the Netherlands and Norway. The interview was conducted face- to face and in English.

The third interview was with Mrs. Maria Malmivaara who is a manager for Business Control Center (BCC) Europe and Africa, Wärtsilä Finland Oy. Mrs. Malmivaara is located in Helsinki and she has worked as a virtual team leader for four and a half years. She currently has direct reports in Finland in Vaasa and Turku, Italy, Great Britain and Germany. Indirect reports are located in Spain, Kenya, the Netherlands and in France. The interview was conducted via Skype and in English.

The fourth interview was carried out with Mr. Janne Laitila who is Manager, PCM Centre SUBB, Wärtsilä Finland Oy. Mr. Laitila is located in Vaasa and he has worked as a virtual team leader for nine years. He has had teams in different locations from 2009, locations being Finland in Vaasa and Turku, Italy and Poland. The interview was conducted face- to face and in English.

4.2.1 Case Company Wärtsilä Corporation

Wärtsilä is divided into three different areas of expertise; Energy Solutions, Marine Solutions and Services and their customers are spread around the world. Their customers can be divided into different segments; for the energy solution business customers mainly are industries, utilities and independent power producers. When it comes to the marine solution business customers are ship builders, ship owners and ship operators. In the Services business the customer group mainly consists of Wärtsilä's installed engine base. In 2017, Wärtsilä's total net sales amounted to EUR 4.9 million and have approximately 18 000 employees. The company is located in over 200 places in nearly 80 countries around the world. Wärtsilä Corporation is listed on the NASDAQ OMX in Helsinki.

The company's biggest production sites are in Trieste, Italy and Vaasa, Finland, and the headquarters are based in Helsinki. During the shareholders annual meeting, the members of the board of directors are elected. The board of directors are in charge of leading the company. It is the board's responsibility to assign the president and the CEO of Wärtsilä. Wärtsilä vision is to be "customer's most valued business partner".

The interviews for this thesis was conducted in Services. In 2017, Services stood for 45 percent of the company's total net sales, EUR 2.2 million. The service sector can be considered to be a support sector for Marine Solutions and Energy Solutions. About 11.000 people are employed by services in about 160 locations worldwide. The customer has the possibility to receive support from Wärtsilä services during their installations complete lifecycle. Wärtsilä supports both power plants and ships with repairs, sustainment, refurbishing solutions and service. The company also offers training, prognostic maintenance and service for several engine brands.

4.3 Reliability and Validity

“The extent to which research findings are really about what they profess to be about” is a validity definition stated by Saunders et al (2016). As answers to the research questions stated in the beginning of this thesis have been answered by the findings of the research conducted, the empirical part can be proclaimed valid. If following question can be answered positively, according to Blaxter, Hughes & Tight (2010), then the research can be determined reliable: “If the research on the essentially same topic in the same setting had been carried out by another researcher, would the findings have been the same?” As attitudes and opinions are analysed in this qualitative research, it might be determine whether the findings are reliable or not, as attitudes and opinions are prone to changes.

As the study is not a sensitive subject per se, it can be assumed that the interviewees have no reason to not speak truthfully and openly. The participants seemed eager to join and all interviewees agreed to the interview immediately as they found it to be an interesting topic. The interviews were conducted in a fairly relaxed setting and the communication was fluent. As a researcher I am of the opinion that the order in which the interviews were conducted does not influence the outcome. The research was also conducted with subjects from two different divisions which allowed seeing if there were any differences between the two. Therefore as the author, I believe that the findings can be claimed to be reliable.

5 FINDINGS

This chapter will discuss the findings of the empirical data collection. First, the team models are established. The chapter will continue with the needed skills of a virtual team member as well as the advantages and the disadvantages of a virtual team. Then the chapter will discuss virtual team leadership and end with the findings about the global mindset.

According to Fischer & Fischer's Team Models, all interviewees' teams fall under category 2, meaning that the team members share nor time, space or culture. This means that all teams are forced to rely on solid work processes, technology and clear communication. Fisher & Fisher's team models are presented in Table 2 below, with team type 2 highlighted.

Table 2. Types of Virtual Teams.

Team Type	Same Time	Same Space	Same culture
1	No	Yes	No
2	No	No	No
3	Yes	No	No
4	No	Yes	Yes
5	No	No	Yes
6	Yes	No	Yes

Source: Fisher & Fisher 2001

5.1 The skills of the virtual team member

Forsell & Malmivaara both state in their interviews that being self-sufficient is one of the main qualities that is needed from a virtual team member. This is directly coherent with Duarte & Snyders comment about the team member being able to handle the narrow division between obligations and freedom. Forsell says that if an employee needs a to-do list in the morning, then that employee might not be suitable for the virtual environment. Forsell & Malmivaara also state that pro activeness and

initiative are also very important for a virtual team member, saying that a team member needs to be “his/ her own manager of sorts”, which is mentioned by Duarte & Snyder to be what sets the members with vast accomplishments apart from an ordinary team member.

Malmivaara points out that a team members needs to have excellent communication skills towards not only the manager, but also towards other team members and other stake holders as is also stated by Duarte & Snyder, stating that recognizing key players and stakeholders, as well as using finesse while communicating with crucial shareholders are useful. Their also mention that being technically shrewd is demanded by the virtual team members, which Laitila mentions in his interview.

Networking skills, as well as using emotional intelligence and finesse while collaborating with crucial shareholders are mentioned by all interviewees as an important skill. Appreciating and taking advantage of diversity and being aware of and sensitive towards personal and cultural characteristics, mentioned by Malhotra et al 2007 is also mentioned by Heinämäki, Forsell and Malmivaara in their interviews.

5.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of virtual teams

One advantage mentioned by Malmivaara is that there are cost savings in a virtual team which is a point made by Lipnack & Stamps and Jones et al. as well. When working with virtual teams the time coverage is wider, and according to Heinämäki and Malmivaara this can be utilized in the distribution of workload, for the individual as well as for the team. Although this is seen as an advantage, it could also be seen as a disadvantage according to Forsell. If you have an issue, it is easy to ask the person next to you for advice, but if you are alone at your location, you might not have anyone to ask, which affects effectiveness. The same is mentioned regarding the workload. If you are in a local team you can share your workload with other team members, but this might not be possible in a solitary location.

Another advantage mentioned by all of the interviewees as well as Lipnack & Stamps, was the diversity in the team. Many people enjoy working in multinational teams, it is mentioned to be more interesting. The team members get to learn about

different ways of working and can also share their own knowledge and so get opportunities to push their careers forward. Learning and novelty within the corporation becomes simpler and creativity prospers, which foster swift solutions and speedy intelligence transfers. Another advantage mentioned by Forsell is that we being closer to the customer, which is beneficial for the business support aspect of the business. This is also coherent with Jones et al comment on the matter.

One disadvantage mentioned by all interviewees and Martins et al and Wong & Burton, is the team member isolation. A team member might not get the chance to meet his or her team members and the leader. It might be good if you get to see your teammates once a year, as not meeting your team members in years may lead to a lack of trust and detachment from common goals. Both the leader and the team member miss out on the “small talk by the coffee machine” as you would have if the complete team was located in one spot, and you might not get to know your teammates on a personal level. This hinders or at least makes it more difficult to build team spirit. Another disadvantage mentioned by Forsell is that when working with people from different countries, you have to accept that people work differently, and so automation is not always possible, which can have a negative impact on the effectiveness.

5.3 Leading virtual teams

From team leading two questions were asked, “What are the challenges of the virtual leader?” and “What are the good sides of being a virtual leader”. These two questions were asked as I believe that it would give a wider answer as supposed to asking “How is it to lead a virtual team?”. Godar & Ferris state that earlier ways of leading people was hierarchical and had a structure of ranks of authority, this is however an outdated way of working, and is certainly not an effective way of leading a virtual team. However, according to Forsell, hierarchical differences exist in difference cultures and these need to be considered when dealing with multinational teams.

Forsell states in his interview that his role as a virtual leader is to inspire the team members to become self-sufficient, foster communication within the team, develop

trust and to coach them and make them understand the vision and the mission of the organization. Malmivaara and Heinämäki also state that micromanagement should be avoided and that the leader needs to trust the employees and also make sure that the team member knows that they can come and talk to their leader if there are any issues needing discussion, professionally or personally. This has also been mentioned in the theory referring to Hoefling, Pauleen and Barbour.

5.3.1 Leading effectively from a distance

Fisher & Fishers' "Leader" is described by Forsell and Heinämäki, when they mention that the team members should be empowered and inspired to find solutions and development ideas. When inspiring the team to be self-sufficient, the team learns to deal with challenges and changes which can be critical for the success of the team. "The Results Catalyst" describes Forsells and Malmivaaras comments about making it crystal clear to everyone what is expected of them and to communicate goals and strategies in a way that everybody can understand and adapt.

Laitinen states that it is imperative to utilize all the technology that is available to the team in order to make the communication as fluent as possible, as well as making sure that team members are using and getting the most out of the technology as possible. Forsell mentions that the leader should help people understand each other, and all of the interviewees have pointed out that communication is key. This points towards Fisher & Fishers "The Facilitator" and to Gibson & Cohens' statement virtual team's full capacity can only come to pass, when the process of communicating is sufficient.

Heinämäki said in his interview that it is important to market the abilities in the team and open up doors for the team and its members. Malmivaara also says that it is important to see the person and to make sure that everyone is being heard. These comments are in coherence with "The Barrier buster". "The Coach" builds relationships, identifies and develop talents and helps the team members grow. Forsell, Malmivaara and Heinämäki point this out when explaining that it is imperative to

develop relationships within in the team and between the leader and the team member, as well as to strengthen the team spirit. This in turn helps the person develop and reach his or her full potential.

Forsell stated that there is a difference between being a leader by title and an actual leader. In a virtual team it is harder to establish amongst the team that you are the leader, not because of your title, but because they believe and feel that you are. You need to inspire respect, by being sincere and open with your team and you need to lead by example. “It is more challenging to reach this in a virtual setting, but it is possible, it just takes time.” This statement is in compliance with Fisher & Fishers “Living Example”, which was the final aspect of being a successful leader.

5.3.2 Global mindset

Forsell, Malmivaara and Laitila point out Earley, Ang & Tan’s statement that it is important to see the differences between cultures and to be able to adjust to different cultural surroundings. Forsell also says that you need to be able to explain and get team members to understand “why we are, what we are supposed to do, why and how”, which points to the intellectual capital Javidan et al mention when stating that a leader needs to be able to explain complex matters in a simple way.

Psychological capital is clearly underlined by Malmivaara and Forsell as they both mention that a being motivated, flexible, self- sufficient and being dedicated to building relationships is imperative for the virtual leader. Another feature of the psychological capital is being passionate about diversity, which is mentioned by Laitila and Heinämäki. A leader with psychological capital is able to build trustful and genuine relationships with his or her team members, which is stressed by all interviewees.

As a virtual team leader it is important for the leader to have social capital, such as being able to organize team members on an international level and to establish relationships worldwide. Malmivaara and Forsell both have teams that are spread out worldwide and they both talk about the importance in knowing how to communicate with different people in different cultures. As earlier mentioned, Forsell states

that it is important to become a leader, not only by status, but by having a strong prominence and being trustworthy. Malmivaara, Forsell and Heinämäki state that it is important to listen to team members and also to help team members communicate amongst each other and to cooperate and engage in conversations, which is in coherence with the opinions of Javidan et al about diplomacy.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter will discuss the research findings and provide the reader with a conclusion of this thesis.

6.1 Discussion

The qualitative data gathered in the interviews was used for answering the research questions; the answers are presented below.

1) What are the aspects of a successful virtual team?

The core of a successful virtual team is its members. Forsell and Malmivaara both point out that having the right team members, the right kind of people, is the key to success. And the main ability that a team member should have according to all interviewees, is communication skills. Not only do you need to be able to communicate with the team members but it also entails being able to express needs, ask questions, talk about issues, talking honestly and openly to the team members as well as the team leaders all the while showing empathy and being able to read people.

In the theoretical section this thesis talks about having a global mindset amongst leaders, but according to this research, this is also important for the team member. A team member should be able to see the difference between cultures and ways of working, and be open minded towards other team members in separate locations. Learning from each other and embracing diversity and also having a clear understanding of what needs to be done is imperative for the team's success. The ability to communicate and understand cultural differences is what sets apart the successful team from an ordinary one.

A team member who is of great value to a virtual team is self-sufficient and proactive. Being proactive when you are all alone in a location might be challenging and it demands a great deal of self-discipline from the employee. A leader might be able to inspire some motivation, but since it can be days, weeks or even months in between discussions with the team leader, it is important for the employee to take

responsibility for his or her task. It is also important that it is clearly stated by the leader what is expected and what tasks are to be performed by the team member.

2) What are the key qualities of a successful virtual team leader?

In their interviews all interviewees pointed out that the main quality of a successful virtual leader is communication skills. A leader needs to be able to communicate with all team members, regardless of status culture or language. Being able to explain the reason of why we are here, how the job should be done, what is expected and the organization's vision and mission is important for ensuring the success of the team. The leader should also be able to establish relationships with the team members and try to get to know all of them on a personal level. It should always be made clear that the employee can always come and discuss professional or personal issues with the team leader.

Another key quality is realizing cultural differences and understanding them. Forsell stated that recognizing differences in communication amongst different cultures is important knowledge for the virtual leader; not only communicating with different people, but to receive as well as to interpret received information. He said that in some cultures a person can say that everything is good and be very polite but he or she is in fact very angry. So, learning the differences in how people convey opinions and information and being able to read people is vital. Forsell also stated that feelings get completely lost in a virtual setting, and misunderstandings can easily happen. As a result, a successful leader is able to not only understand, but to make team members understand each other.

6.2 Conclusion

The thesis aimed to find out what the aspects of a successful virtual team are and what the key qualities of a successful virtual team leader are. The theoretical study first explored the ground stones of a successful virtual team and the main aspect was found to be communication skills within the team. There is however, no one simple answer to the question, instead many pieces to the puzzle were found.

As all the teams researched for this thesis had no common space time nor culture, the teams have to rely solely on technology and, therefore it is evident that the team members need to be comfortable with using the technology provided at hand. It is also evident that a team where the team members feel bonded and have a shared team spirit is a more effective team than a scattered team so to speak. Another point made was that the team member himself or herself needs to be self-motivated, self-sufficient and proactive in order to be a successful member of the team.

The second area of the theory explored virtual leadership and one conclusion made was that leading a virtual team offers a bigger challenge as opposed to leading a regular team. It challenges the leader not only intellectually but also, psychologically and socially. A virtual leader needs to be a great communicator, be able to adapt to cultural differences and situations of similar nature. He/ she needs to show empathy as well as inspire empathy among the team members towards each other. He/ she needs to be a mediator, to understand and to help understand. The leader also needs to be able to communicate goals, tasks and reasons clearly in an understandable way. He/ she also needs to have motivational skills, marketing skills, and a clear understanding of the business itself.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

This is the last chapter of the thesis and it will provide the case company with some recommendations and development ideas also, recommendations for further research will be given at the end.

7.1 Recommendations to case company

During the interviews Heinämäki, Forsell and Malmivaara all stated that in order to make a team effective, there needs to be team spirit. In order to build team spirit, the best way is for the team members to meet face to face. However, this is close to impossible according to the interviewees, as the costs are too great. It is recommended to the case company to find ways to help teams bond and create a sense of team spirit, and see the value of having the people meet each other, as it will aid with the team effectiveness. If the team members know each other, and know what strengths and knowledge each individual has, then reaching out to each other and trusting each other becomes easier, which is only beneficial for the company.

The interviews also mentioned that in order to be an effective leader, the leader needs to travel and spend time with his or her team members. There is a need to build a relationship with each team member, which is a challenge to do over Skype. One interviewee said that the informal element is being missed out on in a virtual team. He stated: “I would say that what you do in six months when you are in the same location that it will take years to accomplish the same thing in a virtual team”, referring to getting to know your team members on a more personal level, and so building a relationship. Three out of four interviewees said that the company is not allowing nearly as much travel as is needed by the leader, due to cost reasons. It is highly recommended to the case company that the value of the team leader traveling is reviewed. When the team leader can meet the team members face to face, it not only aids in building trust, but it contributes to the team member feeling that the leader is trustworthy and inspires respect and ultimately makes the team more effective.

It is also recommended that the case company provides training especially designed for virtual leadership. One interviewee stated that a short training session was provided but, unfortunately, at that time there was not any difference in leading a virtual team and a “normal” team. This is, of course, not entirely true as there are vast differences between the two and as one interviewee said: it is 57 times harder to lead a virtual team than to lead a team which is in the same location”.

The final recommendation for the case company is to create a sense of belonging for the people who are isolated in their locations. It was said during one interview that there is a location where several people are sitting in their offices, most of them part of virtual teams or leading a virtual team, and these people who are in the same location might not know each other, which again can create a sense of isolation. The company should make sure that those people who are sitting alone feel as being a part of the company and that they are not alone.

7.2 Recommendations for further research

Leadership of virtual teams is a broad subject and there are many elements which have not been included in this study. The cultural aspect of multinational leadership is an important element of the subject and is highly recommended that such a study is conducted. Different kinds of virtual teams can also be studied, what kinds are there in the company and what sets them apart in the leadership perspective. A broader study of what is expected/ needed of the virtual team member in order to be successful. The psychological aspect of virtual leadership might be more profound than given credit for and is also a highly recommended area of study.

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Interviews:

Forsell, Mikael. Director at Wärtsilä Oyj Abp. Vaasa Finland. Place and date of interview: Korsholm, 15.04.2018 at 14.00-15.00.

Heinämäki, Jani. Team leader at Wärtsilä Finland OY Vaasa Finland. Place and date of interview: Vaasa, 18.04.2018 at 13.00-14.00

Laitila, Janne. Manager at Wärtsilä Finland Oy Vaasa Finland. Place and date of interview: Vaasa, 23.04.2018 at 10.00-11.00

Malmivaara, Maria. Business controller at Wärtsilä Finland Oy. Place and date of interview: Helsinki, 20.04.2018 at 13.00-14.00.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Basic information

1. What is your job title?
2. How long have you worked as a virtual team leader?
3. Where are your team members located?

The virtual team

4. What skills are needed by a virtual team member?
5. What are the advantages / disadvantages of a virtual team?
6. What makes a virtual team effective?

The virtual team leader

7. What are the challenges of a virtual leader?
8. What are the best sides of being a virtual leader?
9. What qualities are needed from a virtual team leader in order to be effective?
10. What are the most important aspects the leader should focus on in order to lead his/ her team sufficiently?
11. Anything you would like to add?